



## PREVENT RESPIRATORY ILLNESS WITH ROUTINE HEALTH PRACTICES

**HICKORY, NC** - Respiratory viruses, such as flu, rhinovirus, and enteroviruses (including enterovirus D68), can cause mild to severe respiratory illness and become increasingly common during the fall and winter months. They are spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or when someone touches contaminated surfaces such as doorknobs or tabletops. Symptoms may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, wheezing, skin rash, mouth blisters, or body and muscle aches.

To help prevent the onset or spread of respiratory illness, Catawba County Public Health encourages the following routine health practices:

1. **Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.** Washing your hands and the hands of your children often, with soap and water, will help protect you from germs. Hand sanitizer has limited effectiveness against enteroviruses, so handwashing is the preferred prevention method when possible.
2. **Get your flu shot.** The flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu. Because the vaccine is updated annually to cover the most common flu strains, it's important to get a flu shot every year before flu season strikes.
3. **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick, including sharing eating or drinking utensils. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
4. **Stay home when you are sick.** Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.
5. **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
6. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
7. **Disinfect frequently touched surfaces,** such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
8. **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

To learn more about preventing respiratory illness, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

Catawba County Public Health, located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., works to protect and promote the health of all county residents. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

*"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"*